

The citizens of Montreal and its suburbs, in public meeting assembled, strongly protest against the adoption of the Lord's Day Bill now under discussion in the federal parliament.

That measure is a derogation of all the customs which have existed from all time past in the province of Quebec, and infringes deeply upon the civil rights and the social organization of which the inhabitants of that province have heretofore been possessed, both under the French régime and the various constitutions which Great Britain has granted to them since the treaty of Paris.

The citizens of Quebec, as well as those of Ontario, are anxious to preserve the religious character of the Lord's day and to assure to the working classes the rest to which they are entitled.

Deeply imbued with the principles of liberty and with respect for the conscience of their neighbours, they acknowledge without any reservation to the citizens of the other provinces the right to accomplish as they think fit that Christian and social duty, but they believe they are entitled equally to the right of practising the same duty, within the limits of their province, according to their national and religious traditions and to their public laws and customs, older as they are than those of any other province in Canada.

Such a question, involving as it does creed, racial tradition, family habits, civil rights and social organization, should remain within the sphere of action covered by provincial legislation; and according to the declaration made by the Minister of Justice, the legislature of every province could enact under a different form, laws for the observance of Sunday in conformity with the needs and wishes of the people of such province.

At all events, the federal parliament should restrain its action to the adoption of a law regulating the circulation of trains and steamships on Sunday.

The citizens of Montreal hereby appeal to the members of the Senate and House of Commons without regard to race, creed or party, in the name of the peace which should reign undisturbed between the two great social elements of which the people of Canada is mainly composed, and request them most urgently to have regard to provincial rights in this matter and not to impose on the province of Quebec a law contrary to the customs, the sentiments, the interests and the civil rights of its inhabitants.

It is hereby suggested that if a majority of the representatives from the other provinces are anxious to press the adoption of this measure, a clause should be inserted therein providing that the Act shall come into force only in those provinces where the legislature shall enact that the said Act shall apply to their respective territory and inhabitants.

In consequence of all that is above stated, this meeting approves of the attitude of the members of the House of Commons who have heretofore opposed this measure and of their efforts in endeavouring to have it amended, and affirms that their duty as well as the duty of every representative of the people anxious to preserve the liberties of the people, is to oppose by his vote the third reading of the Bill unless such a clause is added as will reserve absolutely to the provincial legislatures a ratifying power.

Sir, I have stated—

Mr. ETHIER. May I ask the hon. gentleman a question?

Mr. HOURASSA. Certainly.

Mr. ETHIER. Who drew up that resolution?

Mr. HOURASSA. That resolution was drawn up by a committee in Montreal. It was moved by about eight or ten citizens whose names I do not now recall, representatives of labour and of various industries.

Mr. ETHIER. Of whom was that committee formed?

Mr. HOURASSA. Its membership was published in the newspapers. It consisted of about fifty gentlemen, with Mr. Guillaume Bolvin, a leading Liberal manufacturer, and Mr. Latreille, one of the representatives of the workmen, at their head, and including gentlemen belonging to the bar, to trade, to manufacturers and to labour. But, Sir, it does not matter who proposed this resolution, it does not matter who drafted it. This resolution was proposed to that assembly, and it was asked if there was any dissent from it. Gentlemen were invited to go there and express their differences of opinion. But I go further. I say not only that it does not matter whether this was prepared by one man or by twenty, but it does not matter whether it was ratified by twenty or by twenty thousand; I ask any fair minded man in this House: Forget for a moment that we sit on either side of Mr. Speaker, forget that we are French and English, Catholic and Protestant; I go further and appeal to these gentlemen with whom I may have had some hard words within the last few days, whether of my race or of any other;—let us forget all the differences that may divide us and that may divide people in this country, forget all this and tell me: Is there any thing in this resolution passed at the meeting in Montreal, or in this amendment which I have just proposed, that is not in conformity with the best traditions of our country, that is not in conformity with the spirit of our constitution and even deeper and more fundamental—with the best wishes and best ideas of the average man in this country? Is there anything in this amendment which tells against the pride or feeling of any man? Is there anything in this amendment which tells against the responsibility of the government? Is this, for instance, to be considered a motion of want of confidence? Why, for the last three days leading organs of the government in the province of Ontario have been advocating exactly the same position. Not later than last night, the Ottawa 'Free Press,' after having published two days ago the text of an amendment almost word for word what I have been urging upon this House, spoke editorially as follows: